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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5515  
INFO RUCNNAF/NORTH AF NEA AND SOUTH ASIAN COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 000765

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/PPD, NEA/ELA, INR/NESA, IIP, PA, ECA; BEIRUT FOR  
SISSON, GRANT, LENZEN

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [SY](#)  
SUBJECT: DAMASCUS MEDIA REACTION, OCTOBER 31, 2008

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News Summary  
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1. Only government-owned daily al-Thawrah was published on Friday October 31. al-Thawrah gave pride of place to strident coverage of the alleged U.S. raid in Abu al-Kamal. The top half of its front page reported on the protest march organized by the Syrian government on October 30 in downtown Damascus and a condolence visit by the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, on behalf of President Assad, to families of the victims in AlbuKamal. The article was accompanied by a huge photograph of the demonstration. Pages 2-3 were fully devoted to coverage of the demonstration and messages received from regional and international groups and leaders condemning the attack.

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Key Headlines:  
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--"Damascus rejects - in a popular march...and the world continues to condemn the American aggression; With President Assad's authorization, condolences to the families of the victims" (front page)

--"A crime against humanity whose perpetrators must be held accountable" (p. 2)

--"[The attack] reflects the bankruptcy of the American Administration and its political defeat: Arab and international condemnation continues" (p. 3)

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Editorial  
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"Perpetual Fumbling:" (op-ed by columnist Mustafa al-Miqdad)

"The Bush Administration once again has confirmed the loss of its [moral] compass in its political, military, intelligence, and strategic calculations. It chose to launch the aggressive attack on civilians working near the border under the pretext of anticipating a confrontation with 'terrorists'...."

"The current Bush Administration is in a perpetual crisis which is still providing reasons for it to continue to pursue a policy of murder and criminality under the pretext of combating the 'terrorism' hidden in the Islamic world, according to its superstitious beliefs.

"The occupation and the Bush Administration, threatened by the loss of the Republican seat in the White House, are practicing a war of psychology and distortion against the American people a few days before the presidential elections in an attempt to implant its idea of pursuing terrorism in all corners of the world and of carrying out preemptive strikes...

"The Syrian response came with clear indications and I believe that more responses are still in the Syrian basket. There is no doubt

that it is able to uncover the falsehood of the American allegations and the [U.S.] Administration's fumbling, as a great power, in taking an effective international role."

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